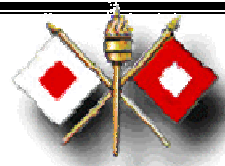


# The Desert Voice

19 – 25 April 2004

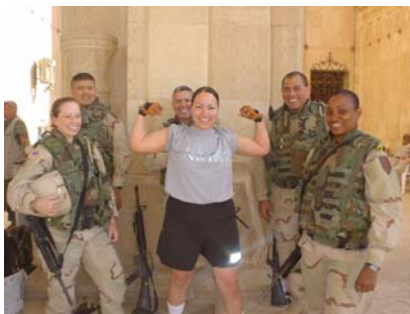


## Commander's Corner

### TIKRIT, IRAQ & AO

**DANGER** - Greetings again from central Iraq. In this week's edition, I'm going to focus on the "big picture" to give you a feel for some of the things the 1<sup>st</sup> Division is doing. However, before I do that, there a couple of highlights that need to be mentioned from the battalion perspective.

Congratulations to SPC Elizabeth Whitehead from HHC in placing second her weight-class at the FOB Danger bench press competition. I could tell you how much she pressed, but I don't want to embarrass our male readers.



**SPC Whitehead flexing for the camera at the FOB Danger bench press competition with her section standing behind her. From left to right: CPT Miller, SPC Store, SSG Barreto, SGT Gonzalez, and SFC Vinson.**

I had the honor to reenlist two



**LTC Garrison reenlisting SPC Dunlap in the in front of the bombed out palace on FOB Danger.**

more great soldiers this week. SPC Dunlap from C Company and SSG Heiner from HHC both volunteered to continue serving our nation. Like I've said before, making a commitment to serve a nation at war is truly special and they and their families have much to be proud of.

Also this week, I had the privilege of seeing the ancient city of Babylon while visiting SSG Reese's F13 team and the CW2 Freeman's G6 team whom support the DTAC. It was a real treat to see and walk around place that most people have only heard about a Sunday School. It put a whole meaning into the cliché "seeing is believing".

The 1<sup>st</sup> Division has had many successes in our short time here. Our impression is that too much attention gets paid to the bad things that are occurring in this country, so I'd like to share a few successes from the division perspective and what the Command and Control (C2) network that the soldiers in the Signal Task Force are providing has helped accomplish.

Engineers cleared nearly 1,500 kilometers of the main highways in the division battle space in the last two weeks, and our artillerymen have now consolidated over a million pounds of captured enemy ammunition. Every kilometer of highway cleared and every piece of ammunition collected and destroyed prevent anti-coalition forces from attacking our soldiers and the people of Iraq.

In the past two weeks over 450 of the division's combat patrols

were combined operations with our Iraqi Security Force partners.

Within the division's battle space, the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) currently has more than 7,000 Iraqi soldiers in ten battalions from a variety of ethnic backgrounds providing security for their fellow citizens. An ICDC training facility at Forward Operating Base Danger will be operational in less than a month with a Primary Leadership Development Course to train Iraqi noncommissioned officers. This is a "stepping stone" towards a safe and secure Iraq, run by Iraqis.

During the last two weeks, operations in the Task Force Danger battle space have resulted in at least 68 enemy killed in action, an estimated 12 enemy wounded in action, and an additional 186 enemy detained. Twenty major enemy weapons and ammunition caches were discovered in the division's area of operations. Significant ammunition seized from these caches included over 448 rockets; 27 SS-40s; over 1,600 mortar, artillery and tank rounds; 35 grenades; 45 one hundred and fifty pound bombs; three, five hundred pound bombs, and over 3,500 rounds of small arms ammunition. Fifty-three improvised explosive devices (IED) were discovered along routes prior to detonation preventing the needless loss of life at the hands of those that threaten Iraq's road to peace and sovereignty.

Finally, for the first time in a year, all 240 hospitals and 1200

primary health care centers are functioning and providing needed healthcare to Iraqis. The Electric Generation Power Plant located in Taza has recently started. This power plant will provide electricity to an additional 300,000 Iraqi homes. The plant will provide 300-400 new jobs to the region for local Iraqis. The project currently employs approximately 400 Iraqis from the surrounding area.

These things are but a snapshot of the many positive things that happen on a daily basis by our forces all over our area. The American people are not aware of the great work its service men and women are doing in Iraq. I encourage you to help spread the word that a lot of good is happening here. Thank you again for the thoughts and prayers for our safety. It does make a difference.

## Alpha Company

We had plenty of rain this week to help keep the dust down. We also discovered that a lot of the wiring at the various FOBs doesn't stand up well to water. We had what would best be considered rolling blackouts throughout our area during the thunderstorms. In addition to the flooding that occurred, this week may have served as a real world example of what electrical and building codes were designed for.

PFC Moore was alerted during the last storm to an apparent breach of FOB Dagger's perimeter. While the storm was raging outside, SGT Freerkson was sitting in his recently constructed "bunker" (and I use that term loosely) trying to figure out why there was 6 inches of water on the floor, when PFC Moore rushed in to tell him that someone was on the roof of her SEN shelter. SGT Freerkson, after

checking to make sure his pants were rolled up high enough to wade to the door, moved to the SEN with the utmost stealth, which is impressive considering his boots were full of water.

Initially, he was unable to identify who was walking around on the roof of the SEN. He then pondered the situation for a moment and posed the question to Moore, "why would someone be on the roof of the SEN anyway?" Moore quickly responded that she didn't know, but she was positive someone was up there. SGT Freerkson then took another look, about which time an ACCP (Anti-Coalition Camouflage Pole) fell from the top of the SEN. SGT Freerkson immediately jumped on the ACCP and ensured that it would no longer run around on the top of Moore's SEN. FOB Dagger has been declared a secure area again.



**The FOB Dagger team (F12 and F72) in front of the "bunker" (again, term used loosely): Front: SPC Drew, PFC Keuma. Center: SPC Dupree, PV2 Rodriguez, PV2 Lovitt, SGT Gardner, SGT Freerkson, PFC Moore Rear: PFC Jagdar**

FOB Remagen experienced a little flooding themselves this week as well. In an effort to ensure soldiers have a comfortable place to sleep, the Army has purchased sea huts, which are small containerized shelters with lights, heat and air conditioning. After a night of rain, soldiers awoke and opened their doors to find a new

body of water on the FOB. To add to the fun, apparently the generator was not quite grounded properly because each time someone touched a door handle or knocked on a door, they got a small electrical shock. The problems had since been fixed. Water evaporates quickly in the desert environment and the generators have now been properly grounded. What worries me is that apparently soldiers continued touching door knobs and knocking on doors after the problem was discovered.

FOB Speicher had its share of water fun as well. Soldiers returned to their housing recently to find there was no power. 1LT Matchin, the company XO, quickly sent someone across the street to the civilian contractors for the FOB to have someone sent out to fix the problem. The first contractor to respond to the call was an electrician who spent several hours verifying that the wiring from the outside of the house to the inside of the house was good. After the first couple of connections tested good, our good XO concluded that the problem was probably that the generator was not putting out any power.

Undaunted by this conclusion, the electrician verified each electrical connection in each house before concluding about 1 o'clock in the morning that the problem was that the generator was not putting out any power. He contacted a generator repairman who was busy with other areas, but stated he would be there as quickly as he could. At that time, exhausted from watching the electrician run back and forth testing every wire he could find, everyone went to bed. What they neglected to do was turn off their light switches. Suffice it to say, that when the generator mechanic



got power flowing back into the housing at about 3 a.m., everyone was well aware he had fixed the problem.

In other news, SSG Prado, SGT Martin, SGT Carter and SPC Bruington arrived this week from Kitzingen still smelling of bratwurst and hefeweissen. We welcomed them to beautiful Iraq and hope they enjoy the stay just as much as we have been.

Our second picture this week comes from SEN team F14 at FOB McKenzie. They never have a good story to tell so we can only surmise that they lead very boring lives. Actually, I believe they are keeping things to themselves so they don't get embarrassed, but sooner or later they'll slip, and I'll make sure to tell you about it.



**SPC Vogel, SPC Snider, SPC Sheils, PFC Rayburn, SGT Apodaca**  
(SPC Metcalf took the picture instead of posing in it in the hopes of not being mentioned)

## **Bravo Company**

This week in Bravo Company includes an update on PFC Mathias, the beginning of a new program on Warhorse, and a whole bunch of promotions.

PFC Mathias called from Landstuhl, Germany, in order to let us know that he got there okay, and to find out what we know about his condition. The conversation was amazing to me, so I thought I would share it here.

At the time of the call, PFC Mathias was still in a morphine induced haze from his flight to Germany. We were discussing his condition, which he still didn't know much about, since he had been knocked out for a majority of his travel time. The conversation went something like this:

Mathias: "What exactly happened to me?"

Me: "You broke your pelvis, pretty much the whole way through. They put in the temporary pins here in Anaconda, but you had to be in Germany for the permanent fix, because it's just not clean enough here, according to the doctors. They want to avoid the infection."

Mathias: "How long am I going to be here?"

Me: "Until you finish rehabilitation. The doctor says it could take from six months to a year, worst case."

Now at this point, Mathias is lying in a hospital bed. He's strapped down so he can't roll over on the broken bones. He just came out of surgery, and was just told by me that he was about to undergo a long and probably painful recovery. He doesn't have a roommate to talk to, and he can't see the TV. If anyone has any right to be upset about this situation, it is him. It was the next comment that caught me off guard...

Mathias: "Well, Sir. I'll try to get better as fast as I can. I'm the only 35E (Radio Repair Specialist) in the company, and I don't want to leave you hanging."

We were huddling around a phone in anticipation of getting him whatever he needs, trying to make sure he's comfortable and keeping his spirits up, and he was worried about us. With this comment, PFC Mathias went from

being one of my soldiers to being one of my heroes. Chris understands selfless service and sacrifice. He understands what it means to be a soldier.

On a lighter note, we have begun a new MWR program on Warhorse. We now have a night club located in the old hanger, with music being played, snack food, and cokes/near beer being served every Saturday night. The DJs for this event are our very own SSG Hogan (Company Supply NCO) and SPC Jackson (RR52).



**SPC Jackson as DJ at the MWR on FOB Warhorse**

They did a great job mixing music on their laptops and plugging their tunes into the stereo receivers available at the hanger. They will continue to serve their countrymen in this capacity for as long as this program continues, which, according to the reviews of the people that were there, will be quite some time.

The following soldiers were recently promoted on Warhorse:



(left to right in the photo) PV2 to PFC Broussard, PV2 to PFC Eaton, PV2 to PFC Kubilis, PFC to SPC Aranzanso, PFC to SPC Mitchell, and PFC to SPC Barron.

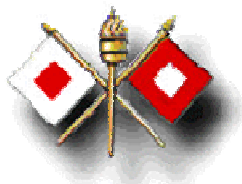
Congratulations to each of them on this accomplishment.

## Charlie Company

Greetings again to the family and friends of Charlie Rock! Everyone here continues to soldier on and make the best of the difficult environment that we live in here in beautiful Tikrit, Iraq. As the temperature begins to rise the Tigris river valley is slowly becoming less the lush green place that we arrived at in February and more of a brown and tan desert.

This past week saw the unit continue to provide reliable communications to the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division and continue to enhance our force protection posture here on the FOB. As we enhanced our force protection posture through hardening our sites with sandbags, many of the soldiers were relieved that we were able to hire a few local Iraqis to fill sandbags for the unit. The current Iraqi wage for a day's worth of sandbag filling is the equivalent of \$9. These workers are paid out of organizational funds for the battalion. However, if the soldiers could, they would gladly cough up \$9 to hire an Iraqi than to have to fill the sandbags ourselves in the 90+ degree heat.

This week we also had the privilege of seeing SPC Amanda Dunlap reenlist in the US Army. SPC Dunlap reenlisted for two years at her present duty assignment (Germany, not Iraq). Hearty congratulations and thanks to SPC Dunlap for her continued service to this nation.



**LTC Garrison & SPC Dunlap at her reenlistment.**

This week we also welcomed 1LT Chris Nagelvort to Charlie Company. Chris will be taking over as Company Executive Officer for CPT Tobias who will now be working in the S3 shop.



**1LT Nagelvort and 1LT Buffa**

As we continue to soldier on here in Iraq please continue your support through correspondence with your loved one and prayer. **CHARLIE ROCK!**

## HHC

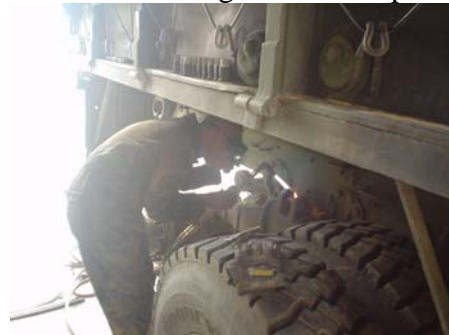
Good day to you all. Another week has passed and we are now into week 11 of the deployment. All of us are patiently waiting for the announcement of how many slots there will be for R&R leave. This week has been really different for all us here in Task Force Danger. We have all started to eat MRE's for lunch and the DFAC is now out of sodas and juices. This will all change soon when the convoys can return to normal, but until then we are so happy for those care packages we already received. If you are wondering what is going on with the mail it

has slowed down due to the attacks on the logistics convoys. We have been getting some, but it is not like it was in March. Here is a picture of HHC's convoy ready team on top and around X4 our Convoys up armored Hummer.



**Back Row: SSG Barreto, PFC Kelly, By the Windshield: SPC Bowen, SPC Leddick (C/711), SPC Shepard, On the Hood: SGT Quentin, Front Row: SGT Housden, PV2 Ramos, 1SG Cromartie, CPT Steyer, SPC Grinage, PFC Nesmith, SGT Briggs, CPT Romanowski.**

Weather update from Tikrit, it has rained twice now in the past week making it hot and muggy. Other than that, the days are around 90 degrees or higher on the average and the nights temperatures decrease to the lower 50's. On Wednesday, we went down to Anaconda to deliver equipment at the same time we found some much needed parts for one of our 5 tons. Here is SGT Housden welding on the new parts.



**SGT Housden welding a vehicle**

Today we had the honor of reenlisting another fine soldier SSG Hiener for now an indefinite term or until he retires. Here is SSG Heiner and LTC Garrison after



administering the oath.



**LTC Garrison reenlisting SSG Heiner at SYSCON on FOB Danger**

HHC in past few days has been enjoying a mostly stable network. We are all hoping that it stays that way forever, but we know that odds are, it will not.

From all of us here we say thank you for your support and we miss you all so very much. 1SG Cromartie and I are so very proud of each and every soldier in HHC. Till we meet again next week this is Tough 6 out.

## **Chaplain**

**Be Your Own Best Self** - The story is told of the father whose young son was less than devoted to studying his schoolwork than he liked. So one day, after many frustratingly bad report cards, the dad sat his boy down to have a little talk. Hoping to encourage and inspire him to do better, he began to tell the boy about Abraham Lincoln. He talked about how Abe Lincoln is regarded as one of America's greatest presidents. He spoke to the child about the great speeches, of his Second Inaugural Address and of The Gettysburg Address. He talked to him about Abe's devotion to keeping the union together and about the Emancipation Proclamation. The young boy was unimpressed to say the least.

So, in utter frustration, the father looked at his son and said, "Do you know what Abraham

Lincoln was doing at your age?" The boy replied simply, "No, but I know what he was doing when he was your age."

Very often, in efforts to inspire those around us to greatness, we use the examples of others. Most often, when we do this, we err. What we should do, I believe, is inspire those around us to be their very own best selves. Paul puts it this way in his letter to the Corinthian church: Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

During this "marathon" of a deployment, simply be who you are and be the best you are. Pace yourself and find your stride. Be your best own self.

## **A/115 SIG**

Alpha Company 115<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion reports another successful week here in Iraq. The company is proud to have a bonafide winner in the friendly competition arena among our ranks.

On 17 April 2004, Sergeant Scott Johnston took part in a bench press competition at the MWR (morale, welfare, and recreation) building at Forward Operating Base Danger. He won the competition with a lift of 290 pounds. The competition criteria judged the winner based on the amount lifted compared to body weight. Sergeant Johnston says he did not expect to win the competition when he entered because: "I see a lot of guys pushing a lot of weight at the gym each day. There were stronger guys than me there, but they outweighed me."

There are other successes as well. We were proud to promote PFC Roger Drumm to the rank of

Specialist. He continues to do an outstanding job for the Alpha Company team. The little successes now will prove to be the pieces of the big puzzle of success in the grand scheme of things later on. The soldiers of Alpha Company continue to reach for the prize, whether it be signal or the various other activities and assignments here in Iraq. Each day, another piece falls into place for Alpha Company, and each day puts the soldiers of the 115<sup>th</sup> one step closer to success in Operation Iraqi Freedom II.



**Sergeant Scott Johnston of the 115th Signal Battalion is awarded a sword by Master Sergeant Anderson for winning the Bench Press competition at Danger.**

## **C/711 SIG**

Another week has flown by for Node Center 14 from Foley Alabama. Many of our soldiers have noted the sad passing of the Talladega race last weekend while they were many miles from home. To pass the time we continued with "sight defense" and "sight beautification" (moving sandbags and gravel from one spot to another to keep up with the Jones's or should I say our fellow guardsman, Co A, 115<sup>th</sup> Sig). Our "sight defense" has seen significant improvement with the addition of individual fighting positions around our perimeter. The HESCO containers that protect us from mortars, has made the traditional fighting position more

of a challenge, but our soldiers have adapted, improvised and overcame! In fact, they were quite creative.



**SPC Leddick and his fighting position**



**SGT Adams and his fighting position**

This past week we also had a significant event worth mentioning – SPC Matthew Eckman turned **21**. **HAPPY BIRTHDAY MATT!** A small celebration took place with the only “alcohol” available – we call it “Near Beer” which is non-alcoholic! Oh well Matt, maybe when you get home! **LET FREEDOM RING!**



**21 year old SPC Eckman with his Section Leader SFC Freeman**

## **B/125 SIG**

This past week has been quiet for us so we decided to highlight a few soldiers for this week’s newsletter. A few weeks ago, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry held an event

focused on women in the Army. We thought it would be appropriate to have a newsletter that highlighted a few of the women that serve with us, Bravo Company, here at FOB Warrior, Kirkuk.

We have 6 young women supporting operations for the entire company. They serve as orderly room clerks, mail handlers, parts specialists, assistant battle captains, radio operators, supply specialists, armorers and nuclear/chemical/biological specialists.

Soldiers serving in the company headquarters are called “force multipliers.” The contributions made by these young lady soldiers help every other soldier throughout the company.

Two of the oldest soldiers, in terms of time in the company, are Specialist Jeffcoat and Specialist



**SPC Jeffcoat working at FOB Warrior** Parker. Specialist Jeffcoat is the company administrative clerk. Her job is to process all of the paperwork in the company. Day to day administrative actions include NCOERs, leaves, personnel actions, and finance paperwork. She is so good at this job that we have never had an administrative issue in the company since I took command.

SPC Parker works as the parts specialist for the company. Her job involves ordering and tracking all of the parts required to maintain a signal company deployed in Iraq.

We average over \$100,000 a week on parts so her job is no small task.



**SPC Parker on FOB Warrior**

These two soldiers are the best in the Brigade at what they do and are complimented daily for their performance by officers and senior non-commissioned officers throughout the Brigade.

Our supply and arms rooms are other areas where young ladies are contributing to our success here in Iraq. SGT Camacho and SPC Mulitauaopele support the company in receiving truckloads of new equipment every week and they actually maintain all of the machine guns and heavy weapons that we use to protect ourselves. The two of them are actually considering posing for an issue of



**SPC Mulitauaopele on FOB Danger**

Guns and Ammo magazine and have been up late holding photo



sessions in their room, but I am not supposed to know anything about that.

SGT Camacho, supply sergeant, is among the newest additions to the company. She was transferred to B Company a few weeks before our deployment to Iraq and had to literally jump through hoops to get ready on such short notice. Her experience and



**SGT Camacho on FOB Warrior** assistance is helping out greatly, as logistics is probably our largest day to day challenge since deploying.

SPC Mulitauaopele, supply clerk, deserves special recognition. During the time of enormous supply and arms room challenges prior to our deployment, before SGT Camacho came to the company, SPC Mulitauaopele served as both the supply sergeant and the armorer and did an outstanding job. It is very rare that a soldier receives an unprompted standing ovation from the company and SPC Mulitauaopele received just that.

Two of our newest women supporting the company are PFC Owens and PFC Pullins. PFC



**PFC Owens handling the mail at FOB Warrior**

Owens was serving in Node Center 62 as a line of sight radio operator, but was brought up to assist the company because of her greater experience. She is currently serving in two areas, managing the enormous amount of mail the company receives and as an assistant battle captain tracking the companies assets and soldiers across Iraq. PFC Pullins serves as our Nuclear Biological and Chemical weapons expert and luckily her services in that area are rarely called upon. On a day to day basis she also assists with the



**PFC Pullins fueling a generator on FOB Warrior**

mail handling and is an assistant battle captain.

These highlighted young women, and the many others throughout the company, contribute daily to our success serving in many different capacities. Some are wives and mothers as well. The sacrifice they make daily deserves special praise and recognition.

## SOLDIER SPOTLIGHT



**Name:** PFC Steven Yelverton

**Duty Position:** Information Systems Operator/Analyst, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 121<sup>st</sup> Signal Battalion

**FOB:** Danger

**Home State:** North Carolina

**Family:** Single

**What he has to say about serving in Iraq:** I love my job and I signed up for the Army because I wanted to. So this is where they sent me and I'm okay with that. I want to say hi to my family, especially my two sisters, Tammy and Amy.



**Officers and NCOs from the 121<sup>st</sup> Signal SYSCON and ALOC. From Left to Right: Back Row - CPT Steyer, CW2 Davis, LTC Garrison, CSM Butler, 1SG Cromartie, 1SG Brown. Front Row - SFC Bodiford, SSG Abbott, CPT Miller, SPC Evans, and CPT Romanowski**